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November 22, 2021

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary, United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Appalachian and Ohio Railroad, Inc.'s Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement Grant Application

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

Please accept this letter as support for the Appalachian and Ohio Railroad (A&O), Inc.'s application for a Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement Grant to improve the safety, efficiency, and reliability of freight rail throughout rural West Virginia. A&O is seeking a CRISI Grant to install a new broken rail detection system (BRDS) on the entire 42-mile signaled portion of the A&O mainline to continue operations, using a combination of federal funding and A&O funding as part of a true public-private partnership.

A&O, a Class III short line railroad, has served West Virginia, by providing freight transportation, since 2005. They operate over 158 miles of track in rural West Virginia and transport over 15,000 carloads annually through its connection to its Class I partner, CSXT. A&O is the exclusive operator over its track and provides the sole rail service to fourteen local West Virginia industries, including a lumber yard, railroad tie facility, rail-truck transloading facility, and other businesses. If they are unable to install the BRDS it would sever the access of local West Virginia shippers, communities, and customers to the U.S. and worldwide marketplace. Failure to operate by A&O will cause them tremendous stress.

A&O simply cannot fund the BRDS system entirely and still meet its other obligations. However, they are fully committed to contributing a portion to help offset the request to the Department of Transportation.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal. Should you need additional information please reach out to Libby Reasbeck (Libby.Reasbeck@mail.house.gov) of my staff.

Sincerely,



David B. McKinley, P.E.
Member of Congress